

# NEW BRUNSWICK FAMILY PLAN FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT



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# Premier's Message

Your government believes in the importance of building a solid foundation to support job creation and economic growth, to provide the best health care possible and to ensure that our province's children receive a high-quality education to prepare them for the future.

The New Brunswick Economic Growth Plan and the 10-year education plans are already making major differences in all regions of the province. The New Brunswick economy is the strongest it has been in a decade; we have cut the deficit in half, while investing more in education and health care. These accomplishments are something we can all take pride in, because we achieved them together.

Now, it is time for the next component of your government's plan to make New Brunswick the best place to work, live and raise a family. The Family Plan will help improve the lives of all New Brunswickers by addressing the factors that are the biggest determinants of our overall health.

Your government will work with stakeholders and other experts over the coming months to develop the new Family Plan. Complex socioeconomic challenges that prevent people from living healthier and achieving their goals in life require multifaceted solutions. We know that by involving you in the process, we can overcome these challenges together.

New Brunswickers want better health care and more support for mental health. You want help making healthier choices and access to programs that support wellness. You want to have the ability to age well and remain at home for as long as possible. You want improved access to daycares and more support for literacy. You want government to work with partners to reduce poverty in our province, to support New Brunswickers with disabilities, and to ensure we provide equal opportunities and support for women in our province.

We will create a healthier and stronger New Brunswick by focusing on seven key areas:

- improving access to primary and acute care;
- promoting wellness;
- supporting those with mental health challenges;
- fostering healthy aging and support for seniors;
- advancing women's equality;
- reducing poverty; and
- providing support for persons living with a disability.

We want to make New Brunswick the best place in which to live, work and raise a family. This plan will guide us there and help move New Brunswick forward.



## Education. Jobs. Families. Listening and getting things done.

Like the strong ties that bind families in our province together, this government has linked three major plans that – together – will improve the lives of all New Brunswickers for decades to come. Each plan is important in and of itself, but each plan also needs the others to succeed.

The **New Brunswick Family Plan** builds on the goals and achievements of our **Economic Growth Plan** and our **10-year Education Plans**. It also works in tandem with those plans to ensure that government is tackling important issues holistically and not operating in silos.

To be successful, our Economic Growth Plan must be supported by our 10-year Education Plans in order to ensure that our workforce is well trained and innovative. Our economy also needs the social supports contained within the Family Plan in order to fully thrive.

Likewise, our education system needs a strong economy so that our graduates can find meaningful work here in New Brunswick. Our education system also needs the Family Plan

so that the social determinants that impact a student's ability to learn can be addressed early on.

Finally, our Family Plan needs a strong economy so that equal opportunities are available for women and for people living in poverty or with a disability. The Family Plan also needs a strong education system to act as a social equalizer.

An integrated approach such as this one is important, especially when a number of government initiatives cut across all three of these plans.

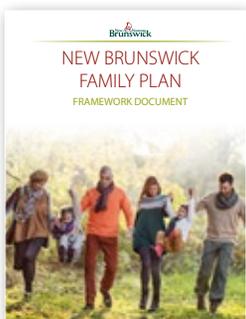
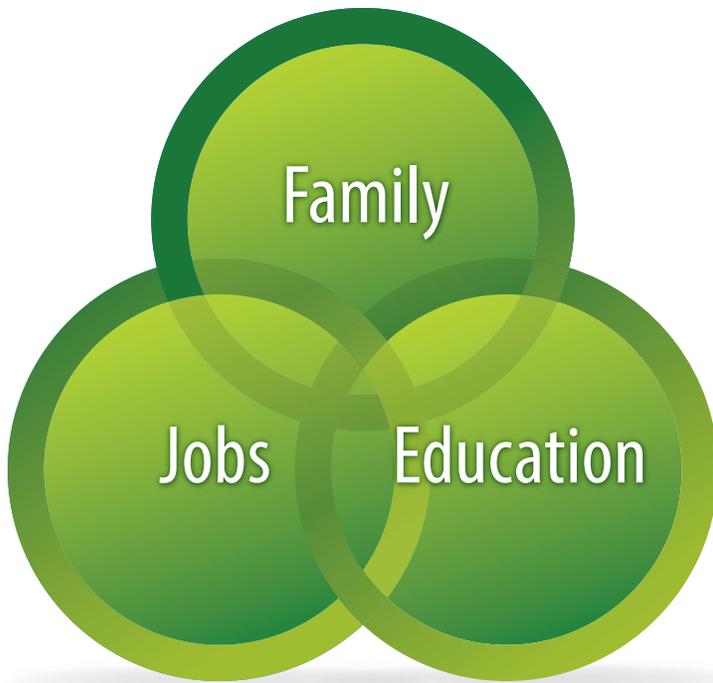
For example, literacy is crucial to our Economic Growth Plan that aims to maintain an educated workforce. Literacy is also an important aspect of our 10-year Education Plans where students are expected to make a seamless transition between learning to read and reading to learn. And finally, literacy is a key component of the Family Plan, especially as it relates to our ability to lift people out of poverty.

Other initiatives tie these plans together as well. For example, improved access to quality and affordable daycare services is as relevant to the New Brunswick workforce as it is to the education system where more students will arrive better prepared for their first year of learning. And, of course, the expansion of daycare services helps support various initiatives within the Family Plan as well, such as reducing the incidence of poverty in our province.

Your government has laid the foundation for these plans to work together to achieve our collective goals. We achieve the best results when we work together and create interconnected plans focused on what matters most to New Brunswickers and their families.

These three plans work in tandem to create a unified vision that will guide your government in delivering results based on the priorities that you have shared with us.

Our collective efforts will make New Brunswick the best place to live, work and raise a family.



# Introduction

A number of initiatives have been launched in New Brunswick over the last decade to help decrease the incidence of chronic disease, increase access to universal health care, and improve overall well-being, including mental fitness and resilience. Additionally, many initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, as well as supporting women's equality and persons living with a disability have been undertaken. However, there are still advances to be made.

Some of the most significant challenges we still face as a province include:

- A population that is aging at a faster rate than the rest of the country, with a significant percentage experiencing at least one chronic condition.
- Rising costs of health care and social services.
- Opportunities for collaboration between the health care system and social services.
- Surpassing the Canadian average in smoking and adult obesity, and lower averages for physical activity and healthy eating (fruits and vegetables).
- Appropriate supports for seniors living on a fixed or low income.
- Poverty, food insecurity, unemployment, and housing concerns as deterrents to well-being.
- Supports for persons living with mental illness and their families.
- Barriers to gender equality.
- Barriers to education, training and employment opportunities for persons living with a disability.

Evidence shows that vulnerability is associated with poorer health outcomes, such as shorter life expectancy. Additionally, social and economic conditions affect people's lives and determine their risk of illness, their ability to take preventive measures, and often, their access to care. Ensuring that vulnerable populations are identified is critical in order to design appropriate interventions, inform decision-makers, and support efforts to address the underlying causes.

This plan is the foundation to establish an integrated system of health and social care. The provision of appropriate health and social supports will help those in need to lead independent, healthy and productive lives. Sustained efforts are required, and a more focused approach needs to be taken with all partners and stakeholders in order to develop a comprehensive plan for citizens and families.

# What do we want to achieve?

We want New Brunswick to be a place where all residents, regardless of ability, can lead healthy and productive lives; where wellness is valued; and where families can thrive.

A provincial strategy is required to improve the health and well-being of New Brunswickers at every stage of life. This will be achieved by focusing on seven key areas:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b><i>Improving access to primary and acute care</i></b>             | To have a sustainable health care system for New Brunswick with better health outcomes, there must be a shift from a systems approach to an approach focused on patients living healthy lives in their communities.                                  |
| <b><i>Promoting wellness</i></b>                                     | Healthy and resilient people and environments are influenced by action on the dimensions of wellness and the determinants of health. These are achieved by focusing efforts on wellness initiatives that affect positive change across all settings. |
| <b><i>Supporting those with mental health challenges</i></b>         | Good mental health is fundamental to the resilience of individuals, families and communities, and aligns with the broader goals of improving the social determinants of health, cultivating a culture of wellness and sustaining the health system.  |
| <b><i>Fostering healthy aging and support for seniors</i></b>        | Parallel to the health care system, delivering more effective and sustainable long-term care services plays an integral role in improving the quality of life for all seniors in the province.   |
| <b><i>Advancing women's equality</i></b>                             | To promote gender equality and rights, reduce systemic discrimination against women and help secure victim safety, action is required in the areas of personal, economic and social security.  |
| <b><i>Reducing poverty</i></b>                                       | Each person in the province has a role to play in fostering economic and social inclusion and collaboratively creating opportunities for socioeconomic development and poverty reduction.  |
| <b><i>Providing support for persons living with a disability</i></b> | With access to education, training, adequate support and employment opportunities, all persons living with a disability can work and lead productive lives.  |

These pillars are not intended to be silos operating in isolation; quite the contrary. Each pillar is a starting point for the development and implementation of effective policies, programs and strategies. They are the lenses through which potential opportunities will be viewed to ensure the greatest success.

An important element of this plan is to ensure a co-ordinated approach to program and service delivery within each government department. This includes departments beyond those with specific mandates in the areas mentioned above, as every department can influence the health and well-being of citizens and families. These initiatives represent an opportunity for departments to foster community development, poverty reduction and wellness across all sectors.

If we focus our efforts, we will achieve:

- Sustainable and improved primary, acute and long-term care systems.
- Increased health and wellness with less reliance on the health care system.
- Better outcomes in the prevention and treatment of mental illness and addictions.
- Age-friendly communities that are inclusive for all people, all cultures and all abilities.
- Further advances in gender equality and rights.
- The ability to meet people's basic needs to live with dignity, security and good health.
- Opportunities for employment and personal development regardless of ability.

Actions undertaken in each of the pillars identified in the following pages will help to establish the roadmap for a sustained Family Plan.

# Seven pillars of the Family Plan

## 1 – Improving access to primary and acute care

The focus on health care in New Brunswick has been, historically, on the acute care setting. However, for many patients with chronic conditions, hospitalization could be avoided if greater access to primary care services were available and more appropriate support were provided in the home or in a long-term care setting. This shift is essential as the health care system prepares to meet the needs of an aging population.

We want New Brunswickers to have better access to primary care, home care and palliative care. New Brunswickers,

especially seniors, want better access to their primary health care providers such as family doctors and nurse practitioners, and they want more care in the community and at home. Additionally, they want access to services that will support families in their most difficult times. This can be achieved by providing a more co-ordinated approach to health care that will help ensure a seamless continuum of programs and services from beginning to end of life.

### Areas of focus

***Shifting the focus from hospital-based care to preventative interventions, primary health care and access to care in the community.*** A system focused on preventative and primary care in the home and the community will lead to healthier New Brunswickers, as each person's health is better managed through regular access to a primary health care provider who knows the patient's history rather than depending on episodic care in the emergency department or walk-in clinic.

***Better access to patient-focused care through interdisciplinary teams as part of an integrated treatment framework.*** Coordinated support and treatment from teams of health professionals can lead to better outcomes for individuals combatting chronic disease and reduce unnecessary strain on the acute care system. Successful outcomes for all New Brunswickers, including Aboriginal People, are dependent on a number of variables such as access to relevant and timely services, as well as equitable care relevant to the patient's needs.

***Managing chronic disease and providing better access to prescription drugs.*** Targeted and evidence-informed strategies, such as those implemented for diabetes, can help prevent and manage chronic disease. Additionally, New Brunswickers need access to the medication essential to maintain good health and quality of life.

***Leveraging expertise and resources to increase capacity in the health care system.*** Each aspect of the health care system must be examined as part of a whole picture to understand the effect any given service has on the rest of the system. Additionally, there are health care professionals with extensive knowledge and expertise. Leveraging both this knowledge and existing resources will help ensure the sustainability of health care in New Brunswick.

***Facilitating access to programs and services in the health care system.*** A healthy population is one that is supported by an effective and efficient system. This can be achieved by facilitating processes that help patients navigate the range of programs and services available, as well as obtain the right care or service, at the right place and the right time.



## 2 – Promoting wellness

Wellness is a catalyst for good physical and mental health, healthy aging, poverty reduction, accessibility and inclusion, and community development. In other words, wellness is conditional to the success of each pillar in this plan, and, ultimately, to the quality of life of all New Brunswickers. The health and well-being of each citizen will only be optimized by focusing on all dimensions of wellness and by addressing the social, economic and environmental determinants of health.

Effectively building a culture of wellness within New Brunswick will be achieved by fully integrating the strategies and initiatives of all departments and agencies. To this end, the government will continue to focus on three domains: healthy eating, physical activity and tobacco-free living, and it is committed to supporting action that effects positive change, both within specific settings (school, community, workplace, home) and across all settings.

### Areas of focus

***Encouraging New Brunswickers to eat healthy and foster healthy living habits.*** Healthy eating is a key component of health as the rewards will be experienced in the short term as well as the long term. Good nutrition helps to protect against chronic disease such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, stroke and high blood pressure.

***Motivating New Brunswickers to become physically active.*** Physical inactivity is one of the major contributors to declining overall health in New Brunswick. This, along with increased sedentary behaviour, contributes to higher rates of obesity, increased prevalence of chronic disease, and a general decline in quality of life. Physical activity plays a key role in improving mental, social and physical health.

***Promoting tobacco-free living and encouraging smoking cessation.*** Tobacco use remains a significant cause of premature disease, disability and death. Living tobacco-free reduces the risk of many chronic diseases and enhances quality of life. Efforts are underway to make New Brunswick a place where living tobacco-free is the norm, not the exception, and where it is easy for everyone to make healthy choices.

***Making information on programs and services readily available to all New Brunswickers.*** Busy schedules and modern conveniences have made living well a challenge for many individuals. Effective promotion and communication strategies to enhance the culture of wellness in the province can contribute to positive social change in improving the health of its citizens.



### 3 – Supporting those with mental health challenges

Good mental health is fundamental to the resilience of individuals, families and communities, and aligns with the broader goals of improving the social determinants of health, cultivating a culture of wellness and making the health system more sustainable. Without good mental health, New Brunswickers are at greater risk of developing addictions, mental illness and chronic diseases.

Although there have been successes in addressing access to mental health care, particularly for youth, there are still gaps in services for the population as a whole. By renewing our efforts and broadening successful models to the whole population, we can ensure a more proactive and coordinated system and better supports and outcomes for our citizens. A proactive approach to care means less reliance on high-cost services such as hospitals and specialty care centres.

#### Areas of focus

***Adopting a proactive approach to improving mental health.*** Developing mental fitness and resilience will support mental health and is key to overall health and well-being. As mental health is interdependent with physical health, earnings, education and standards of living, addressing gaps in the social determinants of health will also support population wellness.

***Bridging gaps in existing programs and services such as those addressing addictions.*** Appropriate supports for adults, in addition to children and youth, can only be ensured by addressing access and continuity of care issues in service provision. Improving adult mental health and addiction services along the continuum of care will lead to better outcomes for New Brunswickers.

***Offering a collaborative model of care through an integrated, person-centred approach to service delivery.*** A key direction in the delivery of addiction and mental health services is the collaboration of partners in all aspects of health care delivery to reduce fragmentation and enhance social inclusion. In addition, treatment and recovery is equally enhanced when achieved through a person-centred approach where individuals are supported to make informed choices within an environment focused on recovery.

***Offering culturally relevant treatments and services, taking into consideration the individual's social context.*** To create and maintain a person-centred approach to service delivery, the system must be responsive to differences among those receiving health care services (geography, age, language and culture). To this end, care and consideration must be given to providing respectful, equitable and high-quality services within the context of diversity, including supporting First Nation and Aboriginal People through culturally relevant resources, community capacity-building and knowledge exchange.

***Enhancing the knowledge and awareness of individuals, families and health care and other service providers.*** Mechanisms to enhance the knowledge of all partners and service providers are essential to ensure that the health care system is attuned to the needs of service users. Additionally, persons living with an addiction and/or mental illness need to have current information on government programs and system supports to make educated choices regarding their treatment.



## 4 – Fostering healthy aging and support for seniors

New Brunswick has the largest proportion of seniors in Canada and this percentage will increase in coming years. While this is a challenge to the system, it is an opportunity, as with health care, to deliver more effective and sustainable long-term care services to improve the quality of life for all seniors in the province.

Seniors want to stay in their homes for as long as possible and they need the proper support to do so. To this end, there must be a shift away from nursing home care to a focus on healthy, active aging, and on home and community-based care integrated across sectors and services. Access to a range of home supports and home health services, as well as specialized care options, will help seniors be more independent and better supported in managing chronic illness.

### Areas of focus

***Focusing on healthy, active aging with particular attention to prevention and wellness within an inclusive, age-friendly community environment.*** Taking ownership of well-being can only be achieved with the support of all partners in the promotion of healthy living and initiatives that encourage seniors to age actively and maintain independence for as long as possible. This will be achieved within a physical and social environment that respects diversity and is designed to help seniors live safely, enjoy good health and stay involved.

***Improving access to home and community-based supports from the perspective of the individual and based on a coordinated model of care.*** To better meet the needs of seniors, enhanced home support services and options for care in the community are needed. Access to these types of supports helps seniors maintain their health and independence through an integrated continuum of care that is more sustainable and targeted.

***Providing a responsive and integrated system that is accessible, identifies and bridges gaps between health and social services, and is centred on rehabilitation and reablement.*** Filling gaps between home-based and residential care will broaden the range of services available and respond to varying needs, enabling seniors to better navigate between health and social services. Effective integration of service delivery integrates primary, acute and long-term care, as well as access to enhanced, timely rehabilitation and reablement services either at home or in the community.

***Facilitating access to appropriate supports and care to enable healthy aging.*** To help seniors experience enhanced quality of life, it is important to ensure that they are able to easily access and navigate the services available to them. Equally important is effective support for caregivers as they deliver care to their loved ones.



## 5 – Advancing women’s equality

In New Brunswick, women represent approximately 51 per cent of the population and 50 per cent of the work force. Women are also pursuing post-secondary education in high proportions, undertaking non-traditional careers and are heavily involved in driving entrepreneurship, both in terms of growth and success rates. However, inequities persist. Women remain seriously underrepresented as decision-makers and in positions of leadership, their income still lags significantly behind men’s, even in 2017. And they are still, by far, the primary victims of domestic and intimate partner violence.

Gender equality is an issue of development effectiveness and not just a matter of political correctness or kindness to women. Evidence demonstrates that when women and men are relatively equal, economies tend to grow faster; the poor move more quickly out of poverty; and the well-being of men, women and children is enhanced. To promote gender equality and reduce systemic discrimination against women, action is required in the areas of personal, economic and social security. This is achieved through compelling and effective initiatives on the prevention of violence against women, including Aboriginal women, and reducing the gender wage gap.

### Areas of focus

**Recruiting more women to fill positions of influence.** Ensuring women are provided opportunities to assume a position of responsibility is a critical element in enhancing diversity in New Brunswick. More work is needed to continue to strengthen gender balance in decision-making, in political and economic life and in the public and private sectors. This will help shape more effective policies, develop a gender-aware society, and create a stronger and more prosperous province.

**Enhancing gender equality.** Gender equality is a fundamental human right. Advancing gender equality is critical to all areas of a healthy society, from reducing poverty to promoting the health, education, protection and well-being of all individuals. This will include, for example, continuing the work undertaken by the government to ensure broader access to reproductive services. Protecting these rights helps achieve social equity and ensures that opportunities are maximized for all New Brunswickers.

**Enhancing pay equity within the province.** Increasing awareness of and working towards resolving pay equity issues will help to ensure that women are afforded the same rights as their peers in terms of compensation in the workplace. Addressing pay inequities ensures wages reflect the value of the job regardless of gender, and equitable compensation practices help ensure a better work environment and lead to increased productivity.

**Increasing access to services and supports for women victims of intimate partner violence.** New Brunswick has the fourth-highest rate of police-reported intimate partner violence among the provinces. A community response is needed to increase the safety of victimized partners, their children and others who may be at risk; reduce the abusive partner’s risk to re-victimize; and to make the best use of available resources. Work must continue to raise awareness and provide support to victims of violence and their children to ensure they have the necessary tools to maintain their safety. Paramount to these efforts is ongoing work to end violence against Aboriginal women and girls, including support for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

**Removing barriers to access and opportunities.** Gender equality will only be achieved when women are afforded every opportunity to fully participate in its progression. Simplifying processes that provide opportunities, as well as access to programs and services to assist women in need is central to achieving this goal.



## 6 – Reducing poverty

Poverty is a societal challenge that requires the attention of all New Brunswickers. Poverty reduction will only be achieved with the collaboration of citizens, non-profit organizations, businesses and government. Everyone has a role to play in fostering economic and social inclusion and to collaboratively create opportunities for socioeconomic development.

This can be achieved by ensuring that the most vulnerable receive the assistance they need to affect change. For example, literacy has a positive and statistically significant association with people's earnings and labour force status; and access to early learning and child care provides benefits both to children

through quality programs and to parents by allowing them to continue participating in the workforce. Poverty in childhood is a risk factor for many health problems in subsequent life.

It is by implementing innovative strategies in policy development, establishing a community-based approach to service delivery and transitioning to self-sufficiency that the province will make significant gains in reducing poverty. To this end, everyone affected by poverty should have the necessary resources to meet their basic needs and to live with dignity, security and good health with opportunities for further education, employment and personal development.

### Areas of focus

***Providing a community-based approach to economic and social inclusion.*** A more economically and socially inclusive New Brunswick will be achieved by: empowering communities to strengthen individuals and groups of people by building on their assets and capacities; providing communities the means to sustain existing initiatives; empowering individuals and families to access benefits and programs available; and providing effective communication tools to help people become better aware of available programs and services in their community.

***Improving labour market outcomes for New Brunswickers.*** Learning, education and training are essential for individuals and communities to reach their potential and promote social and economic inclusion. Consequently, improving the labour market outcomes of those in need will require a continuum of services that address education and training needs. These include job preparation skills and knowledge, as well as workplace essential skills training, among others.

***Empowering individuals and groups of people experiencing poverty.*** Those with distinctive experiences with poverty such as youth, seniors, Aboriginal communities, immigrants, as well as persons living with a disability or mental health issues, must be taken into consideration when trying to reduce poverty. Building on people's assets and capacities, and mobilizing them to effect change in their community are important steps to overcoming obstacles related to poverty, regardless of socially determined circumstances.

***Reducing barriers that prevent people from fully participating in their community.*** Reducing barriers that limit or prevent individuals, regardless of challenge or ability, from fully participating in the workforce and in their communities is an important step in promoting economic and social inclusion. This can be achieved by ensuring employees receive equal pay for work of equal value; promoting inclusivity in the labour market; providing opportunities for people with barriers to continuing education and employment; and supporting initiatives related to wellness, food security and healthy food availability, as well as affordable housing and transportation.

***Facilitating access to programs and services to improve the quality of life of all New Brunswickers.*** To support the transition of individuals from poverty to self-sufficiency, efforts must continue to facilitate access to the many programs and services that already exist in communities. Communication, networking, promotion and training are all important tools to help inform individuals trying to improve their quality of life.



## 7 – Providing support for persons living with a disability

Persons living with a disability often face complex issues and effective solutions require a coordinated approach between diverse stakeholders across each sector of the province. Although significant progress has been made in addressing the needs of persons living with a disability in New Brunswick,

much is left to do. By ensuring equal access to education, literacy, training, support and employment opportunities, many persons living with a disability can work and lead productive lives.

### Areas of focus

**Removing barriers to living a healthy, engaged and well-balanced life.** To ensure persons living with a disability are afforded all the same opportunities, it will be essential to foster good mental and physical health and overall wellness. Additionally, further actions are required to enhance accessibility to affordable transportation and housing.

**Removing significant barriers to finding and maintaining employment.** People with a disability represent an underused talent pool. The employment gap can effectively be reduced by employing individuals who are as diverse as are their capabilities. Research demonstrates that the benefits of enhanced employment opportunities for persons with a disability are clear both economically and socially, since leveraging diversity leads to improved revenues and enriches the lives of an underutilized group that makes a meaningful contribution to society.

**Preparing for successful transitions and improving access to employment or further education/training.** Recognizing the importance and value of preparing young people to work or seek further education will be underscored by strong policies and programs that support successful transitions. Additionally, providing greater access to continuing education and employment opportunities will contribute to improved outcomes for persons living with a disability.

**Enhancing public awareness and promoting best practices that can help individuals achieve their goals.** Generating awareness with the public, and employers in particular, about the potential of persons living with a disability as employees and business owners will help increase opportunities for employment.

**Reducing barriers to access.** Ensuring that persons living with a disability, government and community service organizations have up-to-date information on effective programs and services, as well as evidence-based practices, will reduce barriers to access and lead to better employment outcomes.



# Conclusion

The Family Plan will address the factors that have the greatest impact on our health and well-being. We will make the necessary changes to policy and legislation that will help make the healthy choice the easier choice for New Brunswickers.

The plan will also support our efforts to help prevent disease and injury, support healthy growth and development, foster positive mental health across all stages of life, help seniors age well, help citizens and families living in poverty, provide support for persons living with a disability, and provide equal opportunities and support for women in our province.

We look forward to engaging with stakeholders and other experts during the coming months to lay the foundation for a plan that will create a better, healthier and stronger New Brunswick.

We know that by involving you in the process, we can create a solid plan that will help us achieve our objectives and move our province forward.